

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 IO-13 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
INR-10 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 L-03 SS-15 MEE0-01
TRSE-00 PER-01 OPR-02 /075 W
-----088108 291141Z /17

P R 291040Z JUN 78
FM USLO RIYADH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 551
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, ELAB, SA
SUBJECT: ENFORCEMENT OF SAUDI LABOR LAWS AGAINST WOMEN WORKING

REF A) RIFYADH 397 B) RIYADH 398

1. LABOR INSPECTOR FROM THE LABOR OFFICE, MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, VISITED CORPS OF ENGINEERS (COE) COMPOUND THE MORNING OF 28 JUNE TO CHECK ON WOMEN WORKING IN THE OFFICES OF PACIFIC ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS (PAE), A COE SUBCONTRACTOR FOR MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF USG HOUSING AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES. INSPECTOR TOURED OFFICES, TOOK NAMES OF FOUR WOMEN EMPLOYEES ALONG WITH THEIR HUSBANDS' NAMES AND EMPLOYERS. ONE WOMAN, A USG EMPLOYEE, WAS TOLD TO HAVE HER HUSBAND REPORT TO THE LABOR OFFICE TO DISCUSS THE VIOLATION OF LAW WITH THE AUTHORITIES. OTHER THREE WOMEN WERE PAE EMPLOYEES WHOSE HUSBANDS ARE COE EMPLOYEES; THEY WERE NOT TOLD TO HAVE HUSBANDS REPORT TO LABOR OFFICE.

2. INSPECTOR WAS ESCORTED THROUGH OFFICES BY PAE LABOR RELATIONS REP, A SAUDI NATIONAL, WHO ACTED AS INTERPRETER. INSPECTOR WAS POLITE AND EXPLAINED HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY LABOR OFFICE MANAGER ABDUL RAZZAG TO VISIT PAE TO CHECK WHETHER
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WOMEN WERE WORKING THERE. PAE SAYS THIS IS FIRST INSPECTION OF ANY KIND THEY HAVE HAD FROM LABOR OFFICE.

3. AFTER INSPECTING PAE OFFICES, INSPECTOR ATTEMPTED TO ENTER WAREHOUSE/PX BUILDING. PX MANAGER TOLD INSPECTOR HE COULD NOT ENTER BECAUSE COE COMPOUND WAS MODA PROPERTY AND LABOR OFFICE HAD NO AUTHORITY. PX MANAGER REFERRED INSPECTOR TO MAJOR

FAISAL, COE-MODA LIAISON OFFICER. INSPECTOR ACCEPTED MANAGER'S AUTHORITY, WAS POLITE AND SOON DEPARTED COE COMPOUND.

4. IN AFTERNOON PAE LABOR RELATIONS REP WENT TO LABOR OFFICE TO EXPLAIN TO ABDUL RAZZAG THAT PAE IS WORKING IN THE KINGDOM UNDER MODA AUTHORITY AND LABOR OFFICE SHOULD FIRST GO TO MAJOR FAISAL IF THERE WAS COMPLAINT. RAZZAG REPLIED THAT HE WAS ENFORCING THE KINGDOM'S LAWS AND IF MAJOR FAISAL DIDN'T LIKE IT HE SHOULD COME TO THE LABOR OFFICE HIMSELF.

5. COL. JOSEPH BENNETT, ACTING COE DIVISION ENGINEER, REPORTED HIS CONCERN REGARDING LABOR INSPECTION TO MODA. MODA DEPUTY MINISTER PRINCE TURKI BIN ABDUL AZIZ RESPONDED THAT COE SHOULD NOT PERMIT LABOR INSPECTORS CONDUCT INVESTIGATIONS OF COE FACILITIES AND IF ANYONE ATTEMPTED TO DO SO THEY SHOULD BE REFERRED TO MODA WHO WOULD TAKE CARE OF THE MATTER.

6. COMMENT: MOTIVE FOR THIS INSPECTION MAY HAVE BEEN AN INCIDENT, TOTALLY UNRELATED TO WOMEN WORKING, BETWEEN PAE LABOR RELATIONS REP AND LABOR OFFICE MANAGER. PAE HAS BEEN DEVELOPING A SUMMER INTERN PROGRAM FOR YOUNG SAUDIS; PAE PROPOSAL WAS NOT EXACTLY WHAT LABOR OFFICE MANAGER WANTED AND HE HAD EXPRESSED DISPLEASURE ON THIS MATTER TO PAE LABOR RELATIONS REP THE AFTERNOON BEFORE THE INSPECTOR'S VISIT. THIS INSPECTION, AS WELL AS SOME OTHERS USLO IS AWARE OF, SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN FOR PUNITIVE REASONS OF LOW RANKING OFFICIALS RATHER THAN ANY TRUE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONCERN ABOUT WOMEN WORKING ILLEGALLY IN THE KINGDOM.
GRANINGER

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NNN

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